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SHIRE**

Additional Music and
Sonic Landscapes by
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PETER BERGREN**

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and Synth Programming by
DANIEL WYMAN

Synthesizer Performers
**DAVID SHIRE,
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CLARK SPANGLER,
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Courtney Garcia
Matthew Abrams
Buck Sanders
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**DAVID
SHIRE'S
APOCALYPSE
NOW** THE UNUSED SCORE

ENOUGH
INSANITY
TO GO
AROUND
FOR
EVERYONE
BY TIM GREIVING

In every war there are casualties.

Apocalypse Now wasn't just a movie about war. Francis Ford Coppola waged combat to make his film: against the hostile elements of the Philippines, against a ballooning budget and mounting external pressures... against time.

In his ambitious and surprisingly dangerous undertaking, to realize on film John Milius' head-tripping transportation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* into the chaotic jungles of the Vietnam War, Coppola lost his first Willard, Harvey Keitel, in a heartbreaking casting change weeks into principal photography; almost lost his new Willard, Martin Sheen, to a near fatal heart attack; maintained a tenuous grasp on his Colonel Kurtz, an enigmatic and unpredictable Marlon Brando; and nearly lost his marriage. Hurricanes, both meteorological and psychological, fomented one of the most infamously turbulent shoots in movie history, one that lasted an unprecedented 233 days. And in the fog of war, sometimes even comrades catch friendly fire.

David Shire's film scoring career ignited after a successful and happy collaboration with Coppola on *The Conversation*, and he followed that by composing a score for *Apocalypse Now*. But the gales of a "perfect storm," as Shire phrased it—in part, Coppola's protracted campaign in both the Philippines and the editing room, which then created a scheduling snafu when Shire took on *Norma Rae*—resulted in the termination of the score you now hold in your hands. A score lost to time, its existence

unknown to most filmgoers and even Shire's biggest fans. One of the first all-electronic scores ever written for the screen, composed in the fertile early years of Shire's career and designed to match the psychedelic and extreme ambitions of *Apocalypse Now*. An ancient cassette tape in an unmarked cabinet drawer in the composer's New York study, serendipitously discovered, awakened sleeping ghosts and the revelation of first-class analogue synthesis and big-screen dramaturgy. Now, nearly four decades later, the long and complex history of *Apocalypse Now* is reopened with a new chapter.

SHIRE, IN FACT, was never supposed to score *Apocalypse Now*... although he had loved his first outing with Coppola (who became family by marriage in 1970) on *The Conversation*. For the director's "small" side project, made between the first two *Godfather* films in 1974, "I had hoped I would finally get a big orchestra now that I was doing a Coppola picture, and a big studio, after I'd been doing all these little television shows and low-budget features with dinky orchestras," said Shire in a new interview, who had mostly worked in the television trenches on series like *The Virginian* and *McCloud* and a slew of TV movies. "The first thing Francis said when we got down to talking about the score was, 'I want a piano score.'" Shire laughed. "So I was kind of disappointed. But as it turned out, it was absolutely right, and has probably gotten me more future work than anything I've ever done. It was a wonderful experience."

It was a given that Nino Rota and Coppola's father, Carmine, would return to score *The Godfather Part II* (which won them an Academy Award). When the



director set his sights on adapting Milius' *Apocalypse*, after their mutual college friend George Lucas dropped the project in favor of making *Star Wars*, Coppola imagined a soundtrack for it unlike any he'd ever heard: a completely electronic score, omitting the comforts of orchestral familiarity to capture the story's alien setting and unglued psyche. He'd recently been turned on to Tomita, the Japanese musician who helped popularize the Moog synthesizer with dreamy, futuristic arrangements of the classical repertoire. Tomita's debut album *Snowflakes Are Dancing*, which came out in 1974 and earned four Grammy nominations, arrived in perfect time and synchronization with Coppola's daring concept. "I was a big Tomita fan, so I wasn't disappointed," admitted Shire. "I thought that was a really good choice. I don't know what, thinking back, Tomita's original music would sound like, because everything I knew of his was taking classics and redoing them. It wasn't really composition—it was orchestration." Coppola met with Tomita in March 1977, a few months before photography in the Philippines finally wrapped, but the director quickly realized that Tomita's unhurried method of working wouldn't jive with his filmmaking pace (before realizing just how "unhurried" this project's pace would become).

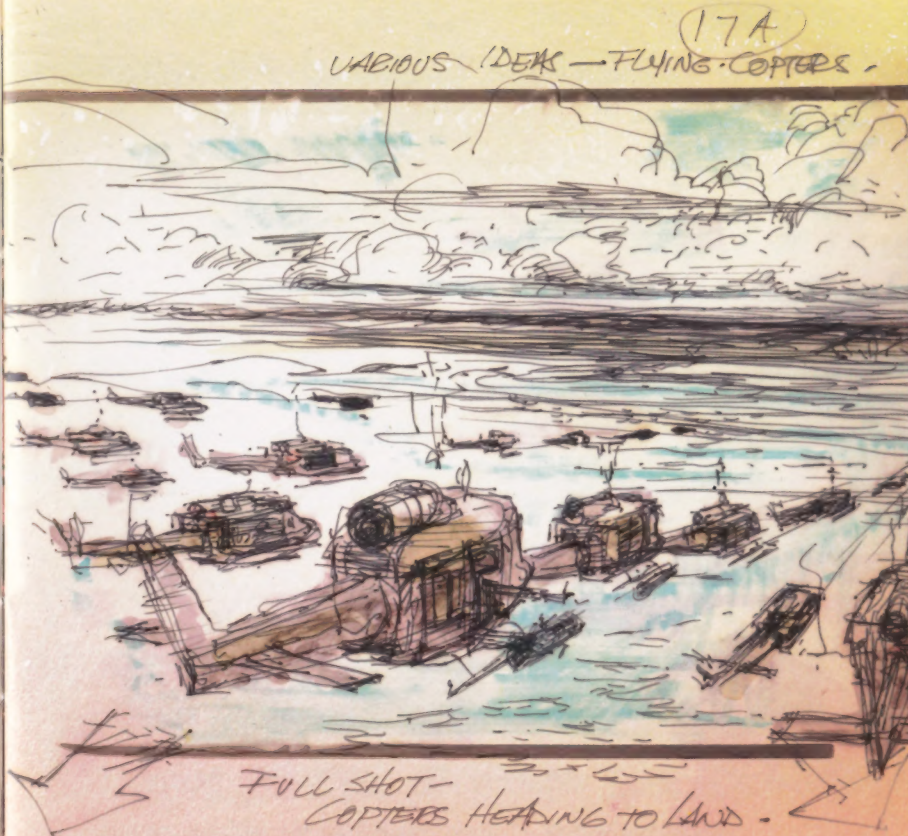
"IT WAS A REAL CHOICE
MISSION. AND WHEN
IT WAS OVER, I'D NEVER
WANT ANOTHER."

At one point, according to editor Walter Murch, Coppola even considered having The Doors score the entire film—"or at least songs they had pre-recorded, because Jim Morrison [a UCLA classmate of Coppola's] was long dead," Murch relayed in Peter Cowie's *The Apocalypse Now Book*. "We tried many, many songs, but anything we put on the film seemed to be so apt that it was wrong, it hit the nail so firmly on the head that it seemed sophomoric." (The one remnant of this concept, of course, is the iconic opening set to the band's trippy song "The End.") At that point, Coppola turned to his brother-in-law—who had actually been dabbling in electronics ever since their introduction into music.

"Luckily I kind of grew up with the synthesizers in the studios," said Shire. "If I had come ten years later, I think I would have been totally mindfucked by the whole thing, because there were so many things out there. But all of us, say, at Universal who were doing cops and robbers pictures and movies of the week, and trying to sound different from what had gone before, were getting this basic education from the ground up in synthesizers." Shire owned and composed on the most popular machines among his peers, including the Arp 2600, but "they were becoming almost a cliché, some of the sounds. Every year or two there was something new that everybody ran to, like little kids playing soccer... wherever the ball is, they all run over to it. Nobody knows enough to go over and stand somewhere else so they can be passed to. It was the era when, to do it really right, you synthesized your own sounds. There weren't hundreds of samples and sounds already available for you to use or reconfigure."

For those bespoke sounds, Shire turned to two young men at the most cutting-edge studio in Los Angeles, who were building an ace reputation for realizing the electric dreams of film composers and other recording artists. Composer Daniel Wyman and recording engineer Peter Bergren became friends at the University of Southern California, and both wound up attending a concert at the L.A. studio of Paul Beaver, a former student of Arnold Schoenberg and a virtuoso organist (accompanying Dodgers games and soap operas alike). Beaver was an electronic music pioneer and the premier Moog wizard of the west coast. He contributed the machine's innovative tones to records for The Monkees and The Byrds, and formed the duo Beaver & Krause with San Francisco musician Bernie Krause (who would come to play a part in the *Apocalypse* soundtrack), creating some of the very first "electronica" albums. Their record *The Nonesuch Guide to Electronic Music*, which came with a large booklet, became the definitive textbook on analogue synthesis in universities across the United States.

Beaver's studio in central L.A.'s Rampart Village was an enormous brick building, a former printing plant, that boasted an impressive array of futuristic musical tech—including a portable modular Moog, which Beaver could cart (in five boxes) into pop and film music recording sessions. "Pete and I first went to that studio in 1969 for a concert," recalled Wyman in a new interview. "I said, 'I want to get to know synthesizers,' and Paul Beaver said, 'Well, you can use the studio between 11 pm and about 9 am in the morning'—and right there he reached into his pocket and gave me the key. He didn't know me, he just said, 'Don't break anything,' and that was how we were introduced." Bergren tagged along as Wyman began



using Beaver's studio (named Sound Arts, formerly Electron Music Studio) to teach himself the ins and outs of old-school synthesis. "I wanted to understand how recording through a mic material that was synthesized but never hit a microphone, but sounded like it had... how the two would work together in concert," said Bergren. Soon Wyman began assisting and orchestrating for Beaver on various projects, with Bergren engineering. One of their first jobs as a duo was creating an electronic version of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" for the Ice Capades. After that came work on a Barbra Streisand album and a string of commercials and film scores, including the Japanese animated film *Metamorphoses*, and *Assault on Precinct 13* for a young director/composer named John Carpenter. The latter led to Carpenter's next film, *Halloween*—one of the most striking all-electronic scores at the dawn of their wildfire spread.

Beaver died in 1975, and Wyman and Bergren took over Sound Arts. In the fall of 1977, they learned about David Shire's *Apocalypse Now*.

"We had a client who was possibly up for the job of an initial electronic score for *Apocalypse*," said Bergren. "In a sneaky Hollywood fashion, we knew he was going to be talking to David at a particular time, and he was at the studio in order to do that. Bob Walter, our business manager, jumped on the line right after the client basically disconnected from David, but the line was still



Sound Arts crew, from left to right: Peter Bergren, mixer Jim Cypherd, pianist John Berkman, and Daniel Wyman

live, and he introduced us to David." (Walter would go on to be the project's music coordinator.) Shire was impressed. "They had a bank of 16 Moog synthesizers," he recalled. "There wasn't much polyphonic synthesis in those days—the machines hadn't quite been invented yet—so the way that Wyman was working at Sound Arts... that was the go-to place if you wanted to do a serious electronic score that wasn't just using machines on the market that everybody had."



Composer David Shire, hair courtesy of the 1970s, when smiles were still in abundance

For the important role of "synthestrator" (essentially, orchestrating for machines), Wyman still needed to audition for Coppola, who was off shooting in the Philippines. He did so by creating an arrangement of "Ride of the Valkyries" for synth voice, accompanied on upright piano by veteran session pianist John Berkman. It was a tongue-in-cheek take on the Wagner icon—serious technique, silly tone—conjuring the most human-like voice Wyman could with the Moog. (That piece is included on this album as a bonus track.) Competing against tryouts from Wendy Carlos and Patrick Gleeson (another electronic music pioneer, who would find his way back to *Apocalypse*), Wyman's audition won Coppola's approval, and American Zoetrope hired him in April 1978 for an undefined time period. "I was specifically told I would be responsible for the electronic orchestration, and working for David Shire and Carmine Coppola," said Wyman. As with the *Godfather* scores, Coppola intended to include his father in the composition process. "It was made clear to me I had to do some work for both of them. I was to do anything that they asked. My contract just said 'to render

your services for the musical score.' Period. Write, arrange, rearrange, orchestrate, copy, prepare, deliver. It was everything—the whole nine yards."

WITH HIS TEAM IN PLACE, Shire began writing. Coppola was sending footage back from the Philippines, which Walter Murch edited into rough sequences for the composer to score. "We had spotting sessions up there, of course, where we were handed spotting notes," recalled Wyman. "I took notes as well. Just your standard film work, except in this particular case it was a huge film with a great many people working on it. The first time I saw any real footage, I flew up alone, and they put me in a room and said, 'There's water there if you need it, and a snack, but we're not going to stop the film. Here's a rough edit'—and it went for eight hours. And they said, 'The next time you see it, it'll be changed.'" "There were a number of versions," added Bergren. "We saw the first half of the film on 3/4 inch [U-matic tape], and there were different versions of that. We waited for the second half breathlessly while they did a first round of editing on it. It had a number of different endings, that second half, so we had to accommodate all those changes."

Before the zeitgeist triumphs of *Chariots of Fire*, *Blade Runner*, and *Midnight Express*, David Shire was inventing a film score completely with tubes and transistors, oscillators and waves. "In a strange way, creating that score was pretty much the same process that I would have gone through if Francis had wanted a big symphonic score," said Shire. "The only difference is, instead of

"ARE MY
METHODS
UNSOUND?"

"I DON'T
SEE ANY
METHOD...
AT ALL."

having an 80-piece orchestra with, say, 20 different kinds of instruments, we had an infinite orchestra of any sound, theoretically, that you could create. So we just had a bigger palette, or a stranger palette. We were creating our own instruments and writing music for them." There are, Shire explained, essentially two types of synthesized scores. "If you're doing a low-budget picture and they want the sound of a full orchestra, which they can't begin to afford, you do imitative synthesis. The samples have been improving and improving through the years—they were pretty cheesy back then. Certain sounds were relatively easy to synthesize, but sounds that had a lot of complexity in them, like strings, were very hard to get close to. And then sampling came in, where, instead of using a synthesized-from-the-ground-up string sound, you'd have access to samples of real orchestras playing all kinds of sounds that were then categorized, and you could build up something from that. And then there was synthesis where you were trying to create an instrument, so to speak, that hadn't been heard before. And that was basically what Francis wanted for *Apocalypse*. He could have hired a Spielbergian-size orchestra if he'd wanted to, but he didn't want that. He wanted something that expressed the otherworldliness and strangeness of that location and that event... which I think was the right choice."

For fans of Shire's tuneful Broadway shows (*Big, Baby*) and film scores (*Return to Oz*, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*), the music he came up with for *Apocalypse* sounds, at times, shockingly brutal and avant-garde—not just because of its cold, inhuman electronic palette, but for its jagged, dissonant writing and Stravinskian collision of major and minor modes. And yet, "there is a kind of organic unity to the score, even though it's a bunch of weird sounds," Shire insisted. "It sounds like music. To my ears it doesn't sound *that*

atonal. It doesn't sound any more atonal than it would if I were orchestrating what my sketch was for a real orchestra. Except you make it even stranger by having this palette that, four years ago, didn't exist." As with any other score, Shire wrote his *Apocalypse* cues with analogue pen and paper, "to get the basic melodies and harmonies," he said, "and then suggest the type of sounds that I heard, like an otherworldly trombone, or a French horn the size of a tank... to try to say in words something that would get close to it. Then we would go in and [Wyman] would hear the kind of music I wrote, which suggested sounds. We would have the scenes, and we worked our way to finding sounds. I remember the chief sound was that big, brass-like sound in the main theme, like a giant trombone. We named these sounds so we could refer to them—that was called the 'scumbone.'"

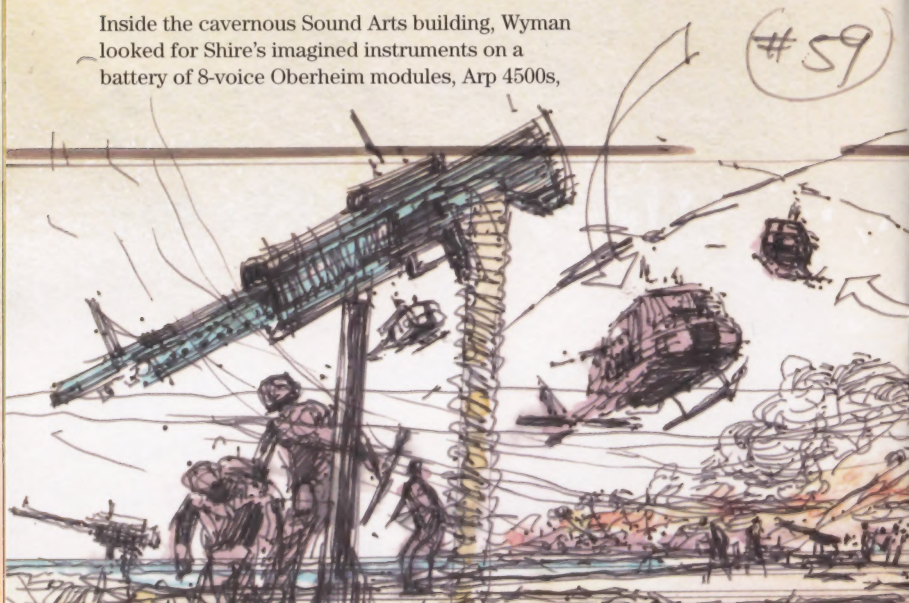
"I have his pencil scores," said Wyman, pulling one out. "He wrote in four lines. He would add in the fundamentals of his melody—this is standard symphonic orchestrational technique—and when he'd get the sense of the kind of thing he wants, he writes in a few words. I'm looking at 'Long Travel Dossier.' It starts with a run that he notates as 'trumpets.' On the staff above that he says 'semi-percussive,' and on top of that he has a line with a gigantic triangle and it says 'cosmic gong.' Under one of the slurs on the second line it says 'growls and slurs.' And this one says 'super trumps'—meaning super trumpet sounds. Somewhere else he says 'bell-like with a gong sustain.' So I was given a lot of leeway, and I'd go home and fret over it all night, and come back in the morning with a bunch of notes. David would listen to all of my sounds, and some of them he wouldn't like and he'd say, 'No, give me more of this, give me less of that.' Sometimes I was good at that, and sometimes I was abysmal."

"Even an acoustic score, where you're only going to use an orchestra, you start with watching the film and try to create music that characterizes the scene or the characters," Shire said. "But I was used to orchestrating 90 percent of my own scores, or writing sketches with very specific indications. In this case, I could only refer to the unknown by starting with the known, and suggesting how it might develop from there. Like with that trombone sound, I said, 'I hear this ugly sound that's basically a trombone, but that is not identifiable as a trombone—unless it was 25 feet long in an echo chamber.' We'd work by trial and error, building up these sounds. The trombone sound, I think, was against a string-like orchestral sound, and there was a harp-like sound. There are plucked sounds, metallophone sounds—vibraphones and celeste—there are bowed instrument sounds, double-reed sounds, single-reed sounds, brass sounds, muted brass sounds... there are all these things that you can start with, and then kind of morph them with electronic technique into something that you hopefully hadn't heard before, that had the right emotional quality. It's all, in the end, about finding the right emotional quality. What synthesis did was allow you to have an infinite orchestra."

The final effect relied heavily on Bergren. "Pete knew that a synthesizer sound without any reverb or processing is deadly," said Wyman. "There's no doubt that our sound was [owed to] a combination of understanding about the way sounds have to come from a speaker to be interesting, and luscious." "If you're a recording engineer," explained Bergren, "your art is in which microphone you choose for a particular player, where you put the mic with respect to their instrument, where they are in the room, how much communication they have with the other players, how much physical

separation there is, acoustically, between one mic pickup and another. But with the synthesizer, obviously it's all coming out of oscillators and filters and mixers and other kinds of modulating elements within the synthesizer, but it tends to sound overly technical, kind of flat if you don't do something in terms of shaping the sound coming from the synthesizer and going onto the tape recorder." To give life and resonance to the robotic sound waves on *Apocalypse Now*, Bergren used everything from cardboard tubes to glass bottles as recording conduits.

Inside the cavernous Sound Arts building, Wyman looked for Shire's imagined instruments on a battery of 8-voice Oberheim modules, Arp 4500s,



and a gigantic modular E-mu System. "It wasn't just Moog," said Wyman. "It was a very eclectic collection of electronic toys." A mirror studio with the exact same equipment was built in the Sentinel Building in San Francisco. American Zoetrope had operated out of the historic landmark since Coppola purchased it in 1973, and *Apocalypse* sound designer Richard Beggs had a small, triangular sound studio in the basement (the site of a speakeasy during the Prohibition). The idea was that Shire and his team could produce the same material in either place, providing Coppola more day-to-day access if he wanted it—although the entirety of the score was ultimately created in Los Angeles. "Money was not an object on that movie," Bergen said. "Not at all."

"WE'LL COME IN LOW OUT OF THE RISING SUN,
AND ABOUT A MILE UP WE'LL PUT ON THE MUSIC."

"MUSIC?"

"YEAH, I USE WAGNER. SCARES THE HELL
OUT OF THE SLOPES. MY BOYS LOVE IT."

THE REASON WYMAN AUDITIONED with "Ride of the Valkyries" was because its famous usage, blasted by Robert Duvall's Colonel Kilgore over the loudspeakers of his fleet of hueys, was written into the script, and Coppola originally intended to make it completely electronic like the rest of the score. "[Francis] wanted there to be a sense of extreme technical precision and soullessness," said Bergren. "So he didn't want a real orchestra doing it, because it would be too warm, too human. He wanted something kind of inhuman but extremely precise, so that when they turn on

the speakers in the helicopters what would come out would be this big wall of aggressiveness. It's a pretty aggressive piece as it is."

That same ethos permeated Shire's score—and yet, the soullessness of the machines are nonetheless imbued with his irrepressibly romantic musical soul. Within the thick jungle of dissonance and alien sounds are bold, lyrical, David Shire melodies. "The word is 'mini-leitmotifs,' and they weren't as recognizable," he clarified. "Sometimes the leitmotif would be more a texture than a melody. But since, as you know, I work mainly from melody, it was hard for me not to start with, if not an actual, full-blown melody, something melodic. Like in that big trombone lead cue that I've called the main title of the picture... there were some like that, but there were some that were more motivic than melodic."

Shire's score for *Apocalypse Now* embarks on a rhythmic river through a hostile and at times mystically beautiful jungle. An evolving current of ostinati, bass lines, and rhythmic ideas thrums like the chopping waters from a boat engine, and exotic melodies swim across the water through thickets of atmospheric sound—electronic insects, chimes, and the distant echo of napalm and gunfire—and the music descends further into madness as Willard edges closer to the "heart of darkness." Picaresque like the film, each cue tells the chapter of an unfolding story—always under the shadow of the horror at the end of the tale.

"His basic chordal material—D, F, F-sharp, A, B-flat—this sort of hexachord construction, permeated the score," said Wyman. "That was the kernel for the entire score. And that, by definition, had within it the half-step and minor

intervals that allowed the score to get very, very dark very quickly, or open up into something that, if you displaced it by an octave, was really quite bright. There were textures for environments as well as people."

Flown in on a synthesized helicopter and announced by "cosmic gong," the opening track ("Into the Jungle") introduces Shire's main theme: a buzzy, mysterious melody for "scumbone" that slithers and climbs like the river carrying Willard toward his unknown fate. (Here, and in later tracks such as "Tiger Tiger Montage," the chirping, buzzing tropical ambience was conceived and rendered entirely with analogue synthesis by Wyman and Bergren.) The current slows further in with an exotic melody creeping along in "Delta," each phrase turned sour with a scratchy, unsettling response. "Village" scores Kilgore's carpet-bombing campaign with military-industrial percussion roiling underneath a crooked, atonal melody—*The Terminator* years before *The Terminator*. "Hell-icopter" lays a mournful, almost Baroque piece for choppy synth lead and bass over the sputtering of whirling rotor blades, a remarkably convincing imitation achieved by Shire, Wyman, and veteran session keyboardists Clark Spangler and Michael Boddicker. "We were playing helicopters with wind, with chop, with every kind of helicopter sound we could figure out, all at once," said Wyman—"just to play one helicopter."

In "Long Travel Dossier," a melody line pings like Morse code over a stormy atmosphere, before a molten synth lead is poured across mystical arpeggios. The score trickles to a slow drip of warbling chime chords in "Dossier Reading 1," before the return of the liquidy synth. The tones and intervals here and in much of the score convey, appropriately, psychedelia. "I might say to Dan when we had a basic sound that was morphing into

something else, 'Could you make it a little more head-trippy?'" said Shire. "Or, 'What can we do to make this scene like everybody is on something?' It's so hard to talk about music with any specificity, you have to use almost generic terms, like 'trippy' or 'weird' or 'scary' or 'nightmarish' or 'less nightmarish' or 'more nightmarish'—like bad directions you give an actor." The surfer Johnson (played by Sam Bottoms) drops acid before the company's climb towards Ho Fat Bridge, a trip reflected in Shire's cue "Orange Light," which features a theremin-like synth singing an eerily beautiful melody that skims across a shimmering bass figure for one of the score's most classically constructed pieces. For "The French Plantation"—an entire sequence that suffered the same fate as Shire's score—the composer summoned a spectral ambience for the ghostly Gallic outpost where Willard and his men meet some of Vietnam's former colonists. A distant "viola" tune haunts the growing sense of madness and decay.

The primitive nature of these musical machines required creative solutions. "Let's be very clear for a modern audience about this," explained Wyman. "Number one, computers did not exist! Number two, everything was analogue. That means two-inch analogue tapes, and all of these synthesizers—with the exception of the Overheim—were monophonic instruments. I had two keyboards on the modular Moog, which meant you could play two lines at once. We played dynamics with foot pedals at the same time, and if we wanted to modify something later, every sound had to go down to a separate track, so we desperately needed all the tracks we could get." "Bear in mind," added Bergren, "that each output from a particular synth was just whatever you could get out of the keyboard with single note depressions. You couldn't do chords. They weren't polyphonic." "I often orchestrated in parallel chords,"

Wyman said. "One little trick was on the top keyboard I would use a parallel fifth, and then on the bottom keyboard I would use a parallel fifth, and then I could move one fifth down and the other one in contrary motion up and get a different chord. So we could do it, but the keyboards themselves were monophonic."

"There are three or four basic sound waves," explained Shire. "There's a sine wave, which is kind of a flat wave. And then there are sawtooth waves, which are the basic waves of trumpet-like sounds. Then there's a square wave, which is the basis of clarinet and single-reed instrument-like sounds. You'd start with a wave, and then with filters and variable oscillators you'd modify that basic sound into something that would be for your purposes, just using your ear. Then if you wanted even more complex sounds, or polyphonic use of those sounds, you would have to put each individual, multiple sound on 16-track or 8-track or whatever you had available, and blend them that way. Now I can do that all on my Logic program, which has 1,000 samples that comes with it, and it's 200 bucks. Then, it cost a fortune. To do it really right, you had to go a studio like Sound Arts, which was brick and mortar, and it was a very laborious process—compared to the way you can do it now. Everybody can do it in their garage."

Shire's polyphonic river churns into stacked, overlapping figurations that escalate into tense, sustained chords in the cue "River Encounter," then descends in a swirling, electric cascade that briefly carries Shire's recurring Oriental leitmotif. As Willard draws nearer to the heart of darkness, the music further unravels. That same motif screams like a buzzsaw in "The Lure of Kurtz" over a repeating, maddening ostinato. After a progression of

mysterious chords plods slowly and forebodingly in "Ho Fat Bridge," that ostinato resumes its insanity in "Dossier Reading 2" and "Kurtz Calling," with variations on the deranged Kurtz motif looming overhead. Thus ends the score's narrative: in a helpless state of an endlessly looping, psychotic thought.

"IN A WAR, THERE ARE MANY MOMENTS FOR RUTHLESS ACTION -
WHAT IS OFTEN CALLED RUTHLESS, WHAT MAY, IN MANY
CIRCUMSTANCES, BE ONLY CLARITY. SEEING CLEARLY WHAT THERE
IS TO BE DONE AND DOING IT... DIRECTLY, QUICKLY, AWAKE."

"DAN AND I WOULD GO UP TO SAN FRANCISCO with cassette

dubs of a draft, so to speak, of cues we did at Sound Arts," said Shire. "And then Walter would put them up against the picture, against the footage—because then it was just blocks of footage. There were four editors working on that picture, and Francis often gave them the same scenes to edit. It was like a competition, because he wanted to get as much input as he could. So we'd put it up against the footage we were working with, and he might say, 'That's great,' or 'That isn't scary enough,' or 'More atonal, less atonal, more melodic, less melodic.' You know, all of the kind of stumbling ways you talk about music to try to hone it down to what you want. So, again, it was the same process as we would do with using a real orchestra. But one of the great things about synthesizers, even more than when you're doing an acoustic score, is you can simulate huge sounds and otherworldly sounds relatively cheaply, without calling in big forces to record them, and take them up and

try them out." At the time, Shire explained, "producers on big-budget, big-orchestra movies were asking for what they called 'polaroids,' which were the sound equivalent of the polaroids that were being taken on the sets to see what the lighting looked like on film before the picture was shot. What we were taking up to San Francisco on *Apocalypse* were not just polaroids. Since the score was ultimately going to be synthesized, we were taking up on cassette things that, when refined a little bit more sonically, and winding up on 16-track rather than a cassette, would be the actual cues."

"We had a screening towards the end," recalled Wyman. "We were already at the 11th reel—I can tell that because I've got the music in front of me. The screening went pretty well, and Coppola had one of the editors cut in *The Rite of Spring* for the end of the film, which we hadn't yet gotten to score. There were a great number of luminaries in the audience that night in Francis' little theater. Francis stood up, introduced David Shire as the composer, and said, 'Well, of course the ending wasn't David... It will be better.' David looked at Francis and said, 'Francis, that's *The Rite of Spring*. It's the masterpiece of the 20th century. It can't be better!' And Coppola just looked at him and said, 'Okay, well it will be better for the *film*,' and everybody laughed."

But laughter was in short supply as post-production dragged on. The aforementioned "perfect storm" soon hit from all sides, and in the late spring of 1979, Shire found himself in the post-*Apocalypse*. ("When the film ended with respect to David's participation," said Wyman, "it meant the end of ours.") Perhaps the only reference to the existence of Shire's score, until now, appeared in a 1980 article in *Keyboard Magazine*, written by Bob Moog



SC 247. EXT. TEMPLE - NU MUNG
• NIGHT •

himself. "The musician-filmmaker communications link never became clear enough for Francis to feel that the music agreed with his own vision of the film," Moog wrote, rather ambiguously. "After more than a year of work and \$100,000 in music production expenses, Francis turned to Carmine to compose the entire synthesizer score, and to David Rubinson to assume the role of Film Music Producer and do whatever it would take to satisfy Francis' requirements." Ultimately, Coppola had his father compose the score, and

hired Bernie Krause and Shirley Walker to shape and arrange it for electronics. He brought in five top synthesizer players, including Patrick Gleeson, to perform it, with percussion tracks contributed by the Grateful Dead spinoff band Rhythm Devils.

Apocalypse Now premiered (unfinished) at the Cannes Film Festival on May 21st, 1979—winning the Palme d'Or—and was released in U.S. theaters on

August 15th. It was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won two. Its now-legendary creation has been documented in numerous places, including a revealing diary by Eleanor Coppola and the 1991 documentary *Hearts of Darkness*. It seemed every inch of the film's fascinating rollercoaster production had been combed through... until the summer of 2013, when a cassette marked "APOC. NOW (Rough Mixes)" was spotted by the author in a cabinet drawer in David Shire's New York home. That "discovery" catalyzed a long, Willard-like journey up the river of licensing negotiations, tape transfers, *more* tape discoveries, interviews, and research. With invaluable input from the composer, and no shortage of blood and sweat from Wyman and Berggren to remaster and assemble the available source material (which, in addition to Shire's cassette, included 1/4" tapes from Wyman's own archives, and 1/4" tapes from music coordinator Bob Walter), a soundtrack album of David Shire's unused, unheard *Apocalypse Now* score is now in the world.

Eventually the storm blew over, and today Shire is thick as thieves with the Coppolas. He went on to write what is arguably his magnum opus,



Composer David Shire and director Francis Ford Coppola smiling at Matthew Shire's wedding in 2016

Return to Oz, for *Apocalypse* editor Walter Murch, and in the fall of 2016, Shire and Coppola broke bread and shared stories at the wedding of David and Talia's son (screenwriter Matthew Shire). "Many years later," the composer said, "it was a little bit of a consolation prize when Walter and I were working on something and talking about what a bad experience *Apocalypse* was for me. He said, 'In truth, David, the score we wound up with was pretty much the same as what you did—in terms of its quality, its usefulness, its service to the picture—but just done, ultimately, by another bunch of guys.'"

You can be the judge of that. But comparisons aside, Shire's score is inarguably a fascinating and important find: a lost piece in the puzzle of one of the great works of American cinema, an exemplary piece of early electronic music production, a kind of concept album for the anarchic Vietnam War, and an alternative experience of accompanying Captain Willard on his legendary trek. An executed genius... resurrected.

"YOU UNDERSTAND, CAPTAIN, THAT
THIS MISSION DOES NOT EXIST...
NOR WILL IT EVER EXIST."

TIM GREIVING is a film music journalist who reports for NPR and the *Los Angeles Times*, and producing this album was his Vietnam. Find him at timgreiving.com.